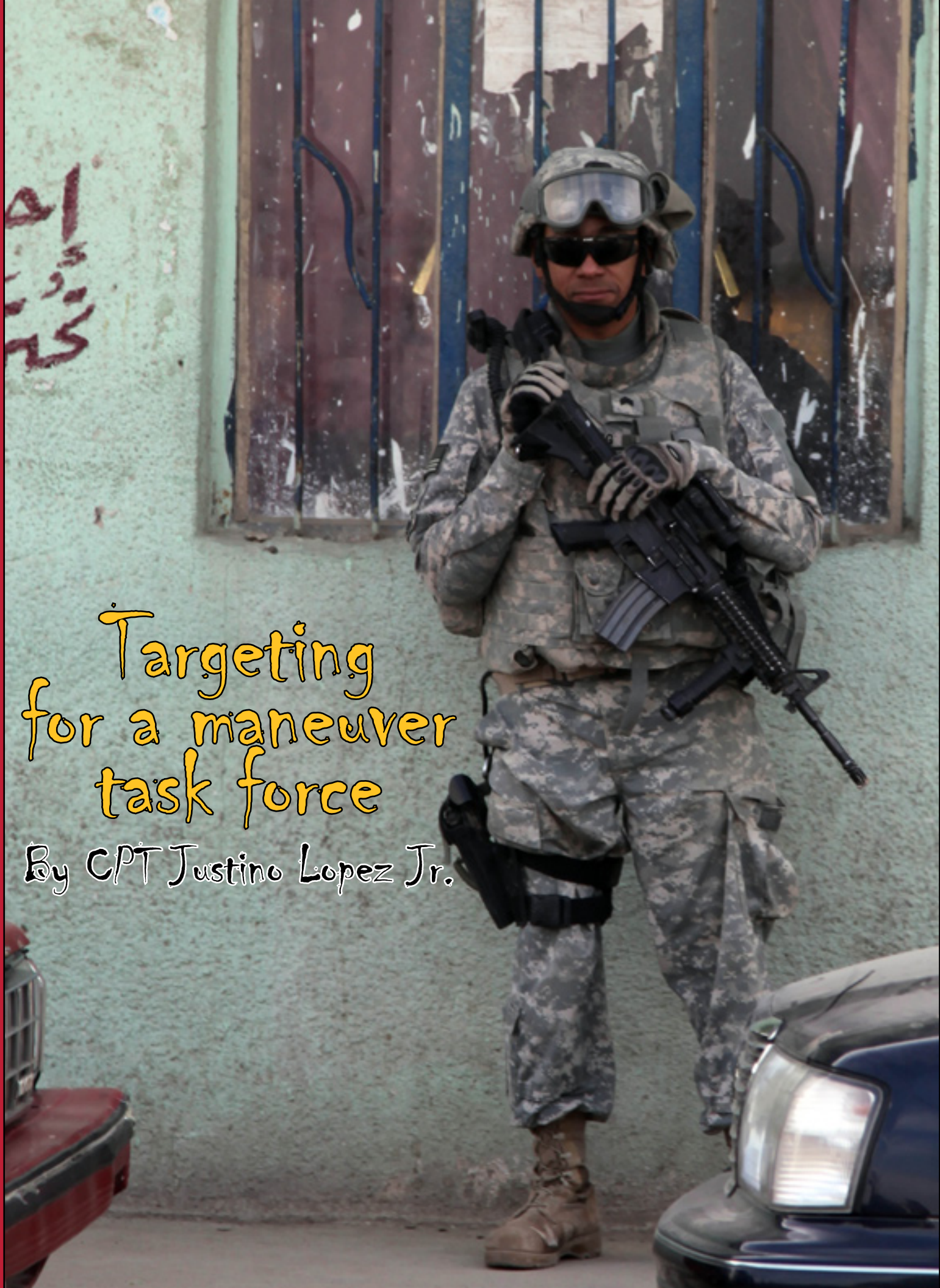

Targeting for a maneuver task force

By CPT Justino Lopez Jr.

Task Force 1-24 deployed from Fort Wainwright, Alaska, in September 2008. Like most other units, we inherited the previous unit's operational tempo and products. During more than 15 months in theater, it developed numerous great products that suited its needs. For example, it combined the targeting decision brief with the operations and intelligence brief on a weekly basis.

The beginning. For several weeks, we used this format for those briefs until we decided to separate them due to our inability to digest the massive amount of data. We also incorporated a targeting work group that focused on nominating targets to the battalion commander for approval in a bottom-up-driven format.

The battalion fire support officer chaired the targeting work group. The group involved key staff members, such as the battalion targeting officer, intel, civil-military operations, operations, a tactical psychological operations team and the company fire support officers. The company fire support officers were the company's representatives to the targeting work group. They relayed the commander's issues and nominated targets to be prioritized through the targeting work group.

We followed the 'decide, detect, deliver and assess' methodology for the targeting work group. It was important to have the company representatives at the targeting work group to get the bottom-driven intelligence and information that allowed the group to decide which targets were going to be prioritized and nominated to the battalion commander. We reviewed all of the ongoing projects, high-value individuals and current themes and talking points that existed for the problem sets within the battalion's area of operations. We also identified quantifiable measures of effectiveness and performance to assess the battalion's progress. These measures of effectiveness were based on the logical lines of operations — established in accordance with the commander's priorities and vision, which we simply termed lines of operations.

"Each [line of operations] represents a conceptual category along which the [host nation] government and [counterinsurgency] force commander intend to attack the insurgent strategy, and establish [host nation] government legitimacy" (*Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency*). These measures of performance reflected our quantified actions to achieve the measures of effectiveness.

Problems. Although we made great progress with our targeting method, we encountered several problems. The targeting work group did not integrate the desired effects we were trying to achieve within our problem sets. Although we reviewed a list of high-value individuals, projects, specific issues within the area of operations, information operations themes to stress and terrain denial targets/kinetic strike packets, we did not tie them together. At times, we became overwhelmed by the shear amount of information and spent too much time trying to prioritize them. Furthermore, we had many projects and humanitarian assistance drops occurring sporadically throughout the area of operations that didn't seem to be tied to a quantifiable effect — other than to help the Iraqi people. As a result, while we had a robust nonlethal system, its targeting was haphazard at best. It was apparent our projects and humanitarian assistance drops had to be tied to our desired effects.

Complications. Our targeting process and decision making was centered around high-value individuals and not on the root problems or target sets. The newly implemented Status of Forces Agreement and the employment of Iraqi jurisdiction (warrants, sworn statements, witnesses, etc.) further complicated our efforts to detain key enemy personnel. Tribal and political corruption (combined with infiltrated Iraqi Security Forces in many areas) resulted in significant difficulties in personality-based targeting. Regardless, we had to respect the Iraqi legal system and stress the legitimacy of the Government of Iraq while operating within the legal framework of the Status of Forces Agreement.

Ideally, the targeting work group would produce a targeting fragmentary order that would be the driving force behind company operations. However, this was not the case for us. Because we focused on everything, in turn, we focused on nothing. The products we pushed to the companies were useful; however, we overwhelmed them with too much information.

Assessments. Measures of effectiveness and performance were reviewed weekly in the targeting work group to assess our efforts. We stumbled upon one issue — the quantified data from the measures of effectiveness and performance. The targeting work group created the quantified data and adjusted it as we thought necessary to accommodate each company's problem sets. For example, C Company was in an area where electricity was poor to nonexistent before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, while A Company was in an area where electricity was more prevalent before the invasion. We could not hold each area of operations to the same standard with respect to our sewage, water, electricity, academics, trash, medical, transportation and agriculture assessments. A specified increase in the hours of electricity per week could be reasonably attained by A Company due to the existing infrastructure, but not by C Company. The same could be said about the circumstances surrounding the transition of the Sons of Iraq to the Iraqi army. Based on the battalion's footprint, each company faced drastically different problems that were hard to tie up in neat and tidy measures of effectiveness.

End state. First, we had to understand the logical lines of operations the battalion commander established to achieve his desired end state. In our case, we focused on three logical lines of operations — security, governance and essential services. We compared the logical lines of operations to legs that hold a stool together. The stool, as a whole, represents the desired end state, but if one of the legs or logical lines of operations becomes loose or, worse, falls off — the entire stool or end state would fail. From this point, we determined what information requirements were necessary to determine which information gaps needed to be filled to achieve the desired end state.

The information requests would replace the measures of effectiveness and performance to alleviate any discrepancies with quantifying data that became apparent because of the diverse dynamics of each company's areas of operations. For instance, C Company focused more on the essential services logical lines of operations because of the extreme lack of such services. Bravo Company focused on the security logical lines of operations due to significant weapons caches and weapons trafficking in its area of operations. The following outlines the solution to our problems, using the decide, detect, deliver and assess model.

Decide. What are the problems? This ultimate question has to be answered. How do we prioritize these problems based on the battalion commander's priorities? To succeed, the targeting work group must identify problems in each battalion's area of operations and prioritize them for the battalion commander. This thorough analysis allows him to make a timely decision.

Once the problem sets were identified, we classified them as target sets. Examples include a specific town; tribal conflict or event; criminal organizations; or a particular aspect of sewage, water, electricity, academics, trash, medical, transportation and agriculture.

SGT Nigel Wongsing, attached to Guardians Maneuver Detachment, 17th Fires Brigade, pulls security during a joint patrol at the Route 6 Bus Station in Basra, Iraq, Dec. 4, 2009. (Photo illustration by Jason Kelly, *Fires* Bulletin. Original photo by SPC Samantha Ciaramitaro, U.S. Army)

Iraqi army soldiers prepare for a humanitarian assistance aid drop in a poor neighborhood that is tied to improvised explosive device/indirect fire activity in Alpha Company's area of operations. The food was funded by the U.S.; however, it was distributed by the Iraqi army to stress the information operations theme of Iraqis in the lead. (Photo by CPT Mike Schwille, U.S. Army)

Then, we determined the desired effect for the set. After the effect was determined, we identified specific targets — the first step in constructing the target synchronization matrix for each target set.

For example, a target set of an enemy indirect fire cell within Sinjar, Iraq, continues to launch rockets into Forward Operating Base Legion. Sinjar falls within A Company's area of operations. We wanted to achieve the following desired effect. 'The indirect fire cell is defeated and there is a decrease in indirect fire attacks against Forward Operating Base Legion. High value individual targets RL 1211 and RL 1230 are killed/captured/neutralized. Weapons and ammunition caches are exploited and destroyed. The people of Sinjar report indirect fire activities to the Iraqi security forces or Coalition Forces and support the Government of Iraq.'

Detect/deliver. We merged the detect and deliver aspects of the targeting cycle into one section. They involve actions to be taken by Coalition Forces to achieve the desired effect against the target set. Each applied asset must have a task and purpose for both lethal and nonlethal assets. This portion of the target synchronization matrix is the meat for the targeting fragmentary order and outlines the tasks to subordinate units that must be accomplished during the targeting cycle. The detect/deliver step also will alleviate numerous projects and humanitarian assistance drops that do not have a specific targeting effect. The bottom line is, 'what do our actions do for us, and what do they do for the Government of Iraq?' Tying this together with the target sets allows us to focus on the problem sets.

At times, target sets are not unique to just one company. The sets often bleed over into another company's area of operations or even be a battalion-level problem set. In this case, we apply all of the maneuver elements that are affected. For example, the indirect fire cell in Sinjar receives its ammunition from the southern town of Ba'aj, which is in B Company's area of responsibility. Therefore, B Company and all of its combat multipliers assets are used.

Assess. Now, examine how each asset applies to the target set individually. The indirect fire cell in A Company's area of operations would be categorized under the security logical lines of operations. However, when we look at the assets used to meet the desired effect for the indirect fire cell, we affect the governance and essential services logical lines of operations, supporting the idea that each logical lines of operations is equally important to achieve the end state. The information requests listed in the target synchronization matrix reference the questions that each asset should answer to assess whether our efforts were beneficial or detrimental to the problem set. The remarks section under 'assess' should discuss the answers to some of the information requests or any other issues for that particular target. The battalion commander can make his assessments based on the targeting work group's assessments and provide further guidance to the targeting work group during the targeting decision brief.

This completes the target synchronization matrix for one target set. Each problem set within the area of operations is broken down by the companies for their specific problem sets and by the battalion fire support element for its specific problem sets that are bottom-up driven. This methodology results in a focus-driven targeting process for the battalion. Now, projects have a purpose and intent behind them. The same could be said for joint operations, key leader engagements and humanitarian assistance drops. They come together to meet the desired effect that is tied to the commander's desired end state for the logical lines of operations.

Targeting cycle. We use a two-week targeting cycle based on the operational tempo. The problem sets are dynamic and could take months to achieve results. We found we could not achieve the desired effects by targeting on a weekly basis. The targeting work group is chaired by the battalion fire support officer and includes the battalion executive officer, battalion targeting officer, S2, S3 plans, S9 (civil-military operations), S1 (public affairs officer), medical officer, civil affairs team, tactical psychological operations team and company representatives. The targeting decision brief to the battalion commander occurs every other week, however, the targeting work group meets every week.

During week 'A,' the targeting work group meets on Monday and reviews any updates that may influence the decision to prioritize new target sets for weeks 'B/C' as a recommendation to the battalion commander. Once we establish a new priority list for the target sets, we dedicate assets to that particular set and develop the target synchronization matrix. On Thursday, we brief the commander on our assessments and our recommendations for weeks 'B/C.' Once the commander gives his guidance, we publish the targeting fragmentary order with the changes and the new two-week tasking on Friday. The company commanders receive the fragmentary

order and have the opportunity during Saturday's operations and intelligence brief to present any issues or comments they have.

During week 'B,' we assess weeks 'Z/A.' We review all of the tasks assigned to the target sets and determine whether or not we achieved the desired effects. Obviously, the time to achieve the desired effects does not take place within two weeks, so most of the target sets do not change. However, this is a good opportunity to review the assets applied and dedicate or remove additional assets to the target sets. The updates to the delivery assets are applied for the next two-week cycle (weeks 'D/E') and briefed to the battalion commander in the decision brief in week 'C.'

During the decision brief, the battalion commander has an opportunity to assess recent progress from weeks Z and A. The format for the decision brief is to review the mission statement, commander's intent, logical lines of operation, information requests, S2 brief (air interdiction, area of operation and situational template, changes to the information operations themes and talking points, target sets (targeting work group assessments), recommendations for the next two week cycle and the commander's guidance. Each company's representative is present at this brief to provide information to the commander and to support the value of their recommended target sets.

Effects. Once we receive the commander's guidance, we publish the targeting fragmentary order. It is structured in the five-paragraph format. Under the execution paragraph, we distribute changes to the information operations themes and talking points. We also insert each target set from the target synchronization matrix. Each company pulls the information from the targeting fragmentary order and the battalion staff coordinates for assets. Now, the targeting fragmentary order becomes the driving force behind the battalion's combat operations.

Our targeting methodology is not 'the answer' to all targeting scenarios, but it serves as a way for us to capture the complexity of our operational environment. It allowed us to focus on the problems in our area of operations and tie together our lethal and nonlethal operations to achieve the battalion commander's end state. Target sets were determined by the targeting work group, and there were no limits to the assets you apply to the targets within the target set. Applying maneuver forces, unmanned aerial systems, civil affairs projects, humanitarian assistance drops, Q-36/Q-37/lightweight countermortar radar and human terrain teams to break down the human dynamics of the area of operations was easy to do. The key is to focus the assets on the desired effect and continually move forward on solving the problem sets encountered in a counterinsurgency environment. Our methodology was tailored to the battalion commander's needs and end state.

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Students at a girl's school in a poor neighborhood that is tied improvised explosive device/indirect fire activity in Alpha Company's area of operations wave their hands during a school supply drop. The Iraqi police conducted the drop to gain support of the local populance. (Photo by CPT Mike Schwille, U.S. Army)